

# WORK

## Marketing Your Business During a Global Crisis

By Bob Abbate

As we're all aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a crisis of global proportions, disrupting large corporations and small businesses, closing schools and requiring people to practice social distancing and virtual communication.

During these uncertain times, one of the major challenges that all businesses face is knowing how to adjust and reevaluate their marketing strategies -- how to advertise, what to advertise, or whether to advertise at all, are among the concerns. While these are unprecedented times, it does not mean that your business should remain silent. This reality requires a thoughtful approach to content and messaging, as well as choosing the right tone and media to reach your audience.

Businesses need to find opportunities that will help them build lasting relationships with their audience from a safe distance. As remote working and social distancing is making people feel increasingly isolated, social media has become critical for people to stay connected. In response, businesses are becoming more reliant than ever on their digital and social strategies. With media consumption at historically high levels, savvy marketers see this as opportunity in the face of adversity. In the last few weeks, our agency has helped many businesses adapt to a new way

of communicating with customers. We've updated their websites, launched new channels and created social media campaigns to reach new audiences.

The message: Selling should not be the first priority – it's about helping.

The only way companies can stay relevant during the current crisis is to listen to their customer's needs, show that they understand, and find ways where they can help. Does your brand's mission authentically align with opportunities to help people? If you are undertaking real, substantive efforts, let people know! Just don't be self-promotional.

**“When life gets back to normal, your business won't be remembered for the products you tried to sell, but instead for the ways in which you tried to help.”**

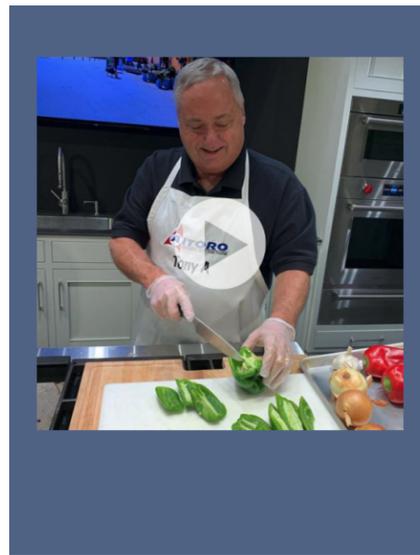
How we communicate is so important. Words matter – what you say and how you say it. We can all practice empathy and understand how others must feel. Use that shared experience to make your content authentic and relevant. A global crisis can be an opportunity to illustrate the compassion and personality of your company.

How you approach your company's advertising during this time is critical. Choose the right tone and the proper words. Acknowledge your customer's fear, and don't just promote the convenience with which they can purchase your product. Be proactive, and deliver the message that “We hear you, and we're here for you.”

Amidst chaos, creativity can thrive – and now is the time to think outside the box. Social media channels like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn are powerful sources of ideas and inspiration that can provide insight for the best approach for your marketing right now. Show your social followers that you care, that you're there for them. Although your showroom, store or restaurant may be closed or limited in the services you can offer, it's OK to let your followers know that you are still in business and you're there for them.

For local businesses that have been forced to close, think about how you can shift your advertising strategy to communicate appropriately with your audience. People who are self-isolating will be seeking opportunities to connect with more people face to face. This is an opportunity to answer questions in real-time, or offer online demos or webinars. With live video, you can connect with your audience in a more direct way. So grab your phone and start streaming! Right now people aren't looking for high production quality, but rather a sincere and authentic message.

Just last week, our team made a recommendation to our client Aitoro Appliance of Norwalk, CT. One of the owners there is Aitoro's advertising spokesperson. Tony is a natural, and represents the brand well. The recommendation: to feature Tony in a series of cooking demonstrations, kind of like a local Food Network show. The next day, the first episode went live on Instagram. It's simple, authentic content like this that will engage your audience today and when we return to “normal.”



As long as businesses approach marketing strategically and creatively, there's no reason why many of these concepts should just serve as an emergency fill-in, but could provide long-term value when the world gets back to normal. And of course, it would make companies more resilient to deal with any future crisis.

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# Let's find the right words.

Now more than ever, it's important to find the right words. Your customers want to hear from you. Be authentic. Be real. Be there for them.

Go ahead, start the conversation.



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